





The 'BURBS

CAST

TOM HANKS as Ray Peterson
BRUCE DERN as Mark Rumsfield
CARRIE FISHER as Carol Peterson
RICK DUCOMMUN as Art Weingartner
COREY FELDMAN as Ricky Butler
WENDY SCHAAL as Bonnie Rumsfield
HENRY GIBSON as Dr. Werner Klopek
BROTHER THEODORE as Uncle Reuben Klopek
COURTNEY GAINS as Hans Klopek
GALE GORDON as Walter

CREW

Directed by JOE DANTE
Produced by LARRY BREZNER and MICHAEL FINNELL
Written by DANA OLSEN
Director of Photography ROBERT M. STEVENS
Production Designed by JAMES SPENCER
Edited by MARSHALL HARVEY
Music by JERRY GOLDSMITH



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NOT IN MY BACKYARD: REVISITING JOE DANTE'S 'THE 'BURBS'

by Kenneth J. Souza

There's a point near the climax of "It's a Good Life," the third segment of the 1983 feature film *Twilight Zone: The Movie*, directed by Joe Dante, where 12-year-old Anthony (Jeremy Licht) brings a manic cartoon creature to life that bears more than a passing resemblance to the classic *Looney Tunes* character "the Tasmanian Devil" - although it's never called that by name. The grotesque creature comes spinning out of a fractured TV set into the living room and stops dead in its tracks, head bobbing and tongue wagging between large, fang-like teeth.

The scene is both silly and shocking at the same time, skillfully straddling the line between horror and comedy.

And it's this horror-comedy hybrid that remains an indelible trademark of all of Joe Dante's films. Dante's comedies are always a bit askew, like those odd-shaped angular backgrounds of the beloved *Looney Tunes* cartoons he grew up with - and mimicked perfectly in what would arguably be the best of the four *Twilight Zone* instalments - yet they have a dark undercurrent bubbling just below the surface. Likewise, his horror films are often self-referential and satirical and are never presented without tongue planted firmly in cheek.

One of Dante's most accomplished and often-overlooked entries in a canon filled with tone-shifting black comedies and satirical horror hybrids is *The 'Burbs*, a wonderful pastiche of suburban paranoia and dark humour. Released in 1989 and starring Tom Hanks in one of his last *tour de force* comedic roles before becoming a decidedly more "serious" actor, *The 'Burbs* may not seem to fit into Dante's oeuvre at first glance, but it bears all the fingerprints of the director's slightly off-kilter sensibilities, equally influenced by *Mad* magazine and a cadre of classic Universal monsters.





Originally entitled *Bay Window* at one point during its development, it was wrongly perceived as a parody of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* - until Dante latched onto screenwriter Dana Olsen's clever script for what it was: a comic retelling of the rumoured "haunted house" paradigm that we all became readily familiar with growing up.

"My father was a golf pro and we kept moving and every place we ever moved, there was always this one house that everyone said 'That's the place! Those people are weird; they never come out', and those stories were pretty ubiquitous," Dante told an audience during a screening of the film sponsored by *Rue Morgue* magazine in 2013. "When I was offered the script, I sort of sparked to it, because I thought a lot of people probably had the same experience and maybe they could relate to it."

It's not surprising, then, that Olsen based his script - which also had a working title at one point of *Life in the 'Burbs* - on real-life experiences from his own childhood. "I had an ultra-normal middle-class upbringing, but our town had its share of psychos," Olsen said. "There was a legendary hatchet murder in the 1930s, and every once in a while, you'd pick up the local paper and read something like 'Librarian kills family, self.' As a kid, it was fascinating to think that Mr. Flanagan down the street could turn out to be Jack the Ripper. And where there's fear, there's comedy. So I approached it as *Ozzie and Harriet Meet Charles Manson*."

The 'Burbs is one of those rare instances in Hollywood where the material is perfectly matched with a director who understands the interdependence of horror and comedy. As he did with *Piranha*, *The Howling* and *Gremlins* before, Dante instinctively knew that humour would help ground the horror and make it all the more realistic and credible.

"I always thought all horror is comedy," Dante told author Jason Zinoman in his 2011 book *Shock Value: How a Few Eccentric Outsiders Gave Us Nightmares, Conquered Hollywood, and Invented Modern Horror*. And Zinoman correctly points out how all the classic Universal monsters were even relegated to starring alongside Abbott and Costello and The Three Stooges in tepid horror-comedy hybrids; so there's always been a fine line between horror and comedy in all of Dante's films.

That line is never more blurred than in *The 'Burbs*, which - along with Dante's 1985 sci-fi film *Explorers* - has gone on to gain a level of cult status since its release.

Despite the presence of Tom Hanks for marquee value - fresh off the breakout success of *Big* - *The 'Burbs* failed to garner much critical acclaim upon its initial theatrical run. In fact, Dante has said the film received some of the worst reviews of his career.

But one noted critic and staunch Dante champion who appreciated the film's dark humour was Jonathan Rosenbaum. In his review, Rosenbaum noted that *The 'Burbs* "can be read as a satire about suburban conformists and snoops - xenophobic busybodies who can't tolerate the presence of any sort of eccentricity in their midst. Or the movie is a cautionary tale about the dangers of insulation and ignorance - minding one's own business and being unaware of the horrible things that are happening right next door. Or, finally, one can take the noncommittal stance assumed by the teenage characters in the movie, who are as undisturbed about the mysterious neighbours as they are amused by the xenophobic snoops trying to uncover them; the kids are simply around to enjoy the show."

It would seem that the critics who panned the film obviously didn't "enjoy the show" and were expecting more of a one-dimensional, by-the-numbers Tom Hanks comedy in the vein of *Big*. But there's much more bubbling under the surface of *The 'Burbs* - just like the mysterious goings-on in the basement of the sinister-looking Klopek house.

On paper, the plot for *The 'Burbs* doesn't really do the film justice, since it's a blended mixture of plot, performance and, ultimately, Dante's persistent point-of-view that make it all work.

In a nutshell, everyman Ray Peterson (Hanks) suddenly becomes curious about the oddball new neighbours who have just moved into their quiet and friendly cul-de-sac on Mayfield Place in the fictional town of Hinkley Hills. His suspicions are fueled by two nosey neighbours, Art Weingartner (Rick Ducommun) and Lieutenant Mark Rumsfield (Bruce Dern), who convince him that the new family, the Klopeks, are up to no good. As the trio - or, if you will, *three stooges* - attempt to spy, trespass and intimidate the Klopeks in escalating escapades that make them appear to be



the true oddballs on the block, the film becomes a testament to the trappings of xenophobia and prejudice.

While Dante used Olsen's script as the blueprint and jumping-off point for the manic chaos that ensues, the actors and director certainly brought their own talents and contributions to the table. Some of this was by design, but much of it was borne out of necessity. Shot on the Universal backlot during a writer's strike in the summer of 1988, Dante said they essentially filmed *The 'Burbs* in sequence, which lent itself to improvisation on the set.

"I can't think of many pictures since (Hitchcock's) *Lifeboat* that take place in the same area," Dante said. "I thought if we could shoot the film in sequence - from the very beginning to the very end, because we were on the same location - we could do a lot of improvising and the actors would be able to come up with some different ideas about where they wanted to go. The finished version of the movie is somewhat different than the actual script, because the actors were all pretty clever and funny. It's more of a performance piece for me than a story."

On repeat viewings, however, it becomes clear that the signature touches of Dante's directorial style are what transform *The 'Burbs* from a typical situational comedy into a dark cult classic. Those tell-tale sight gags, in-jokes and "doodlings in the margins" like the cartoons of artist Sergio Aragonés that Dante so loved in the pages of *Mad* magazine are peppered throughout *The 'Burbs*. "The beauty of *Mad* magazine was that you could read it over and over and in the corner of the frame would be these little gags that you hadn't noticed when you were reading it for the continuity," Dante said.

To this end, there's the Art-shaped hole in the roof of the tool shed in an obvious homage to *Looney Tunes* (and a gag Dante first staged in his directorial debut, *Hollywood Boulevard*) ... there's the address number "669" that changes to "666" when Ray and Art knock on the Klopeks' front door ... there's a glimpse of Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* which then cuts to a snowy TV as the camera pans over to a bed in a nod to *Poltergeist* ... there's a box of *Gremlins* cereal during breakfast ... there's Ricky Butler (Corey Feldman) waxing on about the 1977 horror flick *The Sentinel* ... there's a book about demonology written by Julian Karswell, a character in Jacques Tourneur's 1957 film *Night of the Demon* ... there's

the requisite appearances from Dante regulars Dick Miller and Robert Picardo as two garbage men ... there's a quick cameo from a sled labeled "Rosebud" in the Klopeks' basement in tribute to Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*.

Then there's the devilish dream sequence that plays like a real-life Tex Avery cartoon in which Ray imagines himself strapped to a large outdoor barbecue grill by the Klopeks, while Art shows up as a demented ice cream shop clerk peddling "blood shakes".

"I like fantasy movies, so there's always a fantasy element in there, whether it deserves to be in there or not," Dante mused. "Not that I'm comparing it to (Hitchcock's) *Spellbound*, but the dream sequence used to be longer and it had some pretty cool things in it, but it really did stop the story so we had to take them out."

As he would be for his next two films - 1990's *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* and 1993's *Matinee* - Dante was, for the most part, allowed to make *The 'Burbs* without tinkering from Universal Pictures or his producers at Imagine Entertainment. But one key change from Olsen's original script was the ending, which resulted in several different options once Hanks was attached to star.

"The original ending was Tom Hanks' character discovers that (the Klopeks) are indeed crazy and the picture ends with him going off in an ambulance to be killed," Dante explained. "But once we hired Tom, they said, 'Well, you can't kill Tom Hanks. So you've got to have another ending.' That means we had to explain all the stuff they were doing in the basement, which was never written into the original script. Now we had to actually explain what they were doing, which I think diminishes it a bit."

"We shot three different endings. One of the endings is when Henry Gibson's character gets caught and he goes on and on about why the 'burbs drive people crazy, and that was on the original DVD release as an extra. There was another ending where inside the trunk it wasn't just a bunch of skulls, but the two garbage men (Dick Miller and Robert Picardo). In another ending, it was cheerleaders. But the ending we used I think is fine - it was sort of a compromise."



Yet in the film's penultimate shot - just before the camera zooms back out from the Mayfield Place mayhem into a bookending shot of the Universal logo - Dante manages to get in the final word as Ricky Butler breaks the fourth wall and speaks directly to the camera, saying: "God, I love this street." It's a gag as familiar as Dick Miller in a Joe Dante film and it dates back to the director's affection for a nearly-forgotten 1941 Universal comedy-musical called *Hellzapoppin'* directed by H.C. Potter and starring slapstick comedians Ole Olsen and Chic Johnson. (Ironically enough, the forgotten gem also featured a supporting role from Shemp Howard of Three Stooges' fame.)

"The audience is reminded constantly that they are watching a movie, and similar comic stylings have found their way into my own work," Dante once told *The Telegraph*.

There's no denying *The 'Burbs* is a manufactured movie as it unfolds on the screen ... but it's a place worth revisiting if only for the non-judgmental point-of-view and understanding of human nature that Dante brings to it.

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THE DANTE/GOLDSMITH PROJECT

by Michael Heintzelman

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Over the span of his legendary career, Jerry Goldsmith wrote hundreds of scores - from small screen to big screen, in every genre, for a countless number of filmmakers. Franklin J. Schaffner, Gordon Douglas, John Frankenheimer - these were names from a short list of men whose cinematic works drove Goldsmith's innovation and style to renowned success in the 1960s. When the old studio system faded away in the early 1970s, a new wave of filmmaking style emerged. Movies were grittier, stories less inhibited, canvases less glamorous. Music for movies changed too. Contemporary pop sounds became the preference over traditional orchestral scores. Many composers faltered, unable to evolve or reinvent themselves, but not Jerry Goldsmith. He hit his stride in the 1970s, earning his first and only Oscar for *The Omen* in 1976, and rounding out the decade with two masterpieces: *Alien* and *Star Trek The Motion Picture*. However, as the eighties marched in, the former cinematic masters who had once been synonymous with Goldsmith were gone from the limelight, working sporadically and even more rarely - if ever again - with the composer himself. Goldsmith was still at the top of his game, but the familiar collaborations were virtually gone. That would begin to change when Jerry Goldsmith met Joe Dante.

Joe Dante came up the ranks as a film trailer editor at Roger Corman's New World Pictures in the mid-'70s. After sharing the director chair with Allan Arkush on *Hollywood Boulevard*, Dante was given a solo shot on *Piranha*. Considering the next-to-nothing budget of *Piranha*, it was a surprise to Dante that a well-known composer would even consider scoring his new horror film. "When I got the chance to do *Piranha*, one of the producers came to me and said he thought they could get Pino Donaggio," Dante recalled. "I was astounded. The guy had scored *Don't Look Now* and *Carrie* and here I am making this rubber fish movie thinking 'can we really get this guy?' He did a great job for me." When Dante found himself on *The Howling* two years later, he immediately went to Donaggio. Dante had become a fan

of Italian horror pictures over the years, and he was convinced that Donaggio would be able to translate that same quality to his new werewolf movie. "Pino had found a church organ somewhere in Italy and did this great score. I was really happy with it. The problem with working with Pino was that I could never afford to go to Italy, so he came here. But I also don't speak Italian, and Pino didn't speak English. So we would spot the picture with fellow director Paul Bartel who spoke Spanish, as did Pino, and Paul would translate back to me. It was a very interesting situation. Then Pino would go away, write the music, and send it to us completely labelled. But there was no going to the recording session or consulting about the music."

The Howling opened doors. Steven Spielberg was so impressed with Dante's visual style that he hired Dante to direct *Gremlins*. Though Warner Brothers gave the picture a green light, concerns over the film's budget started and stalled the production repeatedly. The delays were such that Spielberg went on to shoot *Twilight Zone: The Movie*, asking Dante to take on one of that movie's segments titled "It's A Good Life". Jerry Goldsmith, who had scored a number of episodes from the original *Twilight Zone* series, was hired by Spielberg to score the feature. It was the second time Goldsmith worked for Spielberg, having completed *Poltergeist* the previous year, but it was the first time the composer met Dante. "I sort of inherited Jerry," Dante explained. "I really hit it off with Jerry - we just seemed to click. I had a really weird episode, and Jerry had to do a lot of cartoon music. We used a lot of Carl Stalling tracks from Warner Brothers but there was a lot of stuff we needed in stereo, so Jerry's assignment was to try to get the orchestra to play this cartoon music. When Carl Stalling originally recorded those things they were with small jazz groups and they could play very fast, and these studio musicians were not used to playing that fast. It was hilarious to watch them trying to keep up. They would just get lost because the music changes so often. But Jerry managed to make it work, and do his own score as well."

By mid 1983, *Gremlins* found its way back into the light at Warner. With the budget larger than he was accustomed, Joe Dante's first choice for a composer was Jerry Goldsmith - and Goldsmith was happy to do it. While the film was still in prep, Goldsmith managed to complete enough of a theme to play for Dante. "When Jerry first played the theme for me on the piano, I had to do a lot of mental gymnastics to imagine from the piano versions what he would do in the orchestral versions,"

Dante said. "All I knew was that it sounded like a rinky-tink circus theme. I kept thinking 'is this really appropriate for this picture'? Jerry, of course, knew exactly how it would sound with an orchestra. Even if you went to the scoring stage and listened to what the orchestra was playing it would give you a very false impression of what the music sounded like. You would have to go in the booth and hear it with the synthesizer tracks because you couldn't hear them outside. I liked to sit out with Jerry, but if I did I'd have to wear earphones. Otherwise I wasn't getting the true sound. It was such a terrific score."

Gremlins was an instant hit in the summer of 1984. It was also a major turning point for Joe Dante as a filmmaker - one that was very unexpected. "*Gremlins* was an astounding success," Dante stated. "For a while, it made me this A-list director, and I was really a B-list director - I still am. I would have been happy with a career like Jack Arnold had. Now I'm suddenly in the big time, swimming with the big fish, being offered the *Batman* movie and all this other stuff. It really was not what I should have been doing. That was an interesting period, I guess anyone is lucky if they get a picture that's as successful as *Gremlins*."

Despite the new pressures, Dante's A-List status helped continue his collaboration with Jerry Goldsmith. *Explorers* ushered in new challenges for Dante, among them a cast of primarily child actors and the absence of Steven Spielberg as a buffer between himself and the studio (this time Paramount Pictures). Working again with cinematographer John Hora and special makeup artist Rob Bottin, Dante and crew completed photography inside four months. Once the rough cut was assembled, Jerry Goldsmith got a glimpse of *Explorers*. He was surprised by the tone Dante had set. "I had temped a lot of melancholy music on *Explorers*," Dante said, "and I remember Jerry saying to me 'do you really want it to be this sad?' I told him yeah, kind of - the story's about disillusionment. These kids are expecting to see the secrets of the universe and they find aliens that are kids just like themselves. That turned out to not be a particularly popular concept when the movie came out."

Goldsmith's score for *Explorers*, however, was far from melancholy. Demonstrating his appreciation of silence, Goldsmith let the "disillusionment" moments of the film play mostly without music while underscoring the more exciting aspect of the story - three boys building their own spaceship. The result was extraordinary. The *Explorers*

"theme" is a strong, stirring piece of music introduced in segments as the boys piece together their craft, then gets spread throughout the film in varied signatures until the uninterrupted overture plays over the end credits. Dante greatly credits the score as a saving grace. "It's actually one of the best scores Jerry ever did for me," Dante praised. "The movie needed so much help because it was never really finished. Jerry scored the rough cut, and by the time we had a preview it was too late to make any changes. We couldn't move things around to really shape the movie - all we could do was cut things. Jerry did a great deal to make it seem like a movie."

Innerspace saw Joe Dante return to work again for Steven Spielberg. Dipping into several genres, *Innerspace* was an effects-packed feature that proved a challenge for both director and composer. "There was a whole lot of stuff going on in that movie," Dante recalled. "It was very hard to score, but it was just as hard to temp track. I was very meticulous in my temp tracks. Most composers actually hate temp tracks because it's annoying to them to have to filter out the music of someone else while they're thinking of what they themselves are going to write... but you really have to try to get as much of a sophisticated score as you can for rough cuts and previews. I knew Jerry wouldn't write anything exactly like what I had put in - nor should he have. But there are certain things that you want to start at a certain place, stop at a certain place, give a certain punctuation, change dramatically at a certain point, and he was great at that."

A running joke between Dante and Goldsmith continued into *Innerspace* concerning temp tracks as well - a joke whose origin began out of necessity. Because the tone of Dante's films were such an odd mix, the director often found himself relying on Bernard Herrmann's score for *The Trouble With Harry* for his temp tracks. After working together over three pictures, Goldsmith's grouching behavior amused Dante to a point that he would needle the composer just for fun. "Jerry's personality was that he was always griping about something. It was part of the relationship; it was part of what made him fun. So from *Gremlins* on I used the same cue from *The Trouble with Harry* in all my temp scores. It annoyed him, and it just got to a point where I would stick it in just to piss him off. Jerry would sit there in the screening room and gripe 'Christ - not Bernie Herrmann again!'"



Dante enjoyed working with Goldsmith, and *Innerspace* was no exception. The job was to make the film as good as it could be, and Goldsmith understood and respected that. "Jerry would occasionally have suggestions for other places to put music," Dante acknowledged, "but for the most part he would agree with where I thought the music should go, start and stop. The great thing about Jerry was he was so improvisational. If he played something and you had a thought about it, you'd be able to go up to him and he would actually change it. If you wanted it more plaintive, more raucous - he figured out a way to do it. He'd play this, play that, cut this part. You got exactly what you wanted. Often he would even look at the picture with the music, realize he didn't like what he had done and change it. It was exciting to go to the scoring sessions because there was a lot of creating going on. It really was a collaborative effort."

Ultimately, the *Innerspace* score is an eclectic one, derived from non-thematically driven action cues yet still keeping a focus on the story's unlikely hero, Jack Putter (Martin Short). "Jerry humanized the movie a lot. It's essentially Martin Short's story, and I think Jerry got the pathos out of it - the drama out of the comedy that he needed to do. *Innerspace* is a nice score. It's very unobtrusive."

As unobtrusive as *Innerspace* was, Dante's next film, *The 'Burbs*, was completely opposite in its manner and musical approach. A dark comedy set in Suburbia USA, *The 'Burbs* featured characters from the obnoxious to the cowardly to the creepy - recurrent qualities in Joe Dante films. However, the unexpected twists this time weren't in the screenplay as much as they were in the manner of how the production ran. "There was a writers' strike at the time," Dante recalled, "so a lot of the movie was improvised and it was shot in sequence. It's more of a performance piece than a story - because it certainly doesn't hold much water as a story."

The diversity in characters and spontaneity in performances gave Jerry Goldsmith a broad musical canvas, with signatures ranging from subtle to verbose. "The score is very similar to a performance piece as well. There is a certain lightness and quickness to it - except when you get to the bad guys, and then there's the heavy, organ music parody. I had originally temped that picture with a lot of Italian western music. I do remember trying to get him to imitate an Ennio Morricone piece and, try as he might, Jerry could never get that European quality into his music. He would tend to go back to his *Take a Hard Ride* style of western music, and that worked okay. But there was

a scene that had been temp-tracked to a Morricone piece, and Jerry must have taken ten or eleven tries at recording something that would fit. He did pick up on the mythic aspect of what was going on since I was sort of parodying a Leone-like standoff, and he did actually end up using a lot of that western stuff in the movie. But in the end, for that particular scene, we ended up buying the actual Morricone cue."

Dante's sixth picture with Goldsmith was a trip back to familiar territory. As the eighties waned, Warner Brothers was hungry for another *Gremlins* success. After many attempts to get a sequel going - most of which not involving Dante whatsoever - an invitation was given to Dante to essentially do whatever he wanted with the new story. *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* was absolute Joe Dante carte blanche - from mocking its predecessor and corporate sponsorship to the endless in-joke gags. As with the original *Gremlins*, Jerry Goldsmith made a cameo, but this time there was a twist: Jerry had lines. "When I shot *Gremlins*, Jerry looked right at the camera - and it's in the movie," Dante laughed. "On *Gremlins 2*, Jerry and his wife both appear. I joked with him before we started, 'Now Jerry - don't look at the camera.' It all went fine. But I think Jerry found his rightful place behind the podium."

While Dante had free reign in *Gremlins 2*'s storyline, Goldsmith was given just one restriction. "I asked him not to use the 'Gremlin Rag' as the basis for the movie," Dante said. "The original picture was kind of bucolic, and there's a certain quality in that music. The second film is in New York City - a whole different world - and I didn't want it to sound like the first picture. It had to sound different. Jerry quoted it in the places where it was appropriate, but he didn't recycle the old score - he did a complete new one."

Still deep in his 'electronic' period, Goldsmith's music for *Gremlins 2* was no departure. Indeed the ever-turning wheel of technology not only made its mark in Goldsmith's orchestrations, but also in how the composer did his work. "Because I worked with Jerry so long, I saw all the technological changes that took place between *Gremlins* and *Looney Tunes*," Dante stated. "We would go into his studio and there were Yamahas and cables and all these electronics all over the place. It was bizarre. But eventually, toward the end, it all shrunk down again. You would go into his studio and there would be nothing but a computer, a screen and a keyboard."

It seemed less high tech than the piano, only now it was way high tech. Jerry could now press a button, run the scene, and you would hear an orchestra just like when it was all done. It was quite amazing.”

Things changed a great deal as the '90s continued. Dante found himself working more in television than features, with *Matinee* being his only major theatrical film between 1991 and 1998 (though Dante had been attached to *The Phantom* in mid-'90s, the studio pulled the plug over the budget). As comfortable as Dante was working the small screen, it made for schedule conflicts when it came to Goldsmith. “The thing with Jerry was, as he became more and more successful, you had to book him long in advance or he wouldn’t be able to do it,” Dante explained. “I don’t remember him ever being unavailable for a feature but I remember him being unavailable for a lot of TV. He didn’t do much TV later in his career.”

Dante and Goldsmith may not have been working much together in the mid-'90s, but during the decade after *Twilight Zone*, the two men had become friends - a rare thing in the Hollywood machine. “I was always very grateful for the time I was allowed to spend with Jerry,” Dante stated. “We didn’t go to each other’s houses every day - nothing like that. A couple of times a year I got invited over to Jerry’s house for dinner or we’d go out. You have to remember when you make movies there are long periods when you don’t see people because you’re working on something or they’re working on something. There are also all these inter-connected relationships that you have with people that come into your life, like a soundman who you only see when you’re making a movie... then maybe you’ll see him come to the office, or you’ll have lunch. Essentially your relationship is a professional one. As much as you get to know them and you let them into your life you find - at least in this business - there isn’t a lot of time to cultivate a lot of friendships.”

The last two collaborations of Joe Dante and Jerry Goldsmith proved to be battles - not between the two men, but with the studios. On *Small Soldiers*, Dante found himself in a quagmire of studio notes on a daily basis. Disagreements about what would remain and what would be cut bounced back and forth throughout production. In the end, it was Goldsmith who ‘saved’ the film. “I think his score for that picture is nothing less than heroic,” Dante praised, “considering the mess that the movie was and the incredible changes that were foisted on us every five seconds. When

Jerry put that music on it looked like a movie - before that it was just a mess. The main title is terrific. It really sets up the movie in a way that it needed.” But the disarray of the film’s production did not end once score recording sessions began. More executive indecision led to more cuts, which led to another mess yet again. “There was a lot of last minute editing going on after Jerry had written his score. His music editor, Kenny Hall, would be up in the booth at the mixing stage cutting notes together - literally reconstructing pieces of the score to fit scenes that were now a foot longer here, or a foot shorter there, or three frames shorter somewhere else, yet still hitting the right points in the material that was left. It was an astounding job considering the obstacles that were thrown in front of him.”

Another five years passed before the two men met on a recording stage again. As much as Dante delighted in working with Goldsmith once more, the looming reality hit that *Looney Tunes* might be their last collaboration. Jerry Goldsmith was fighting cancer. Dante knew Goldsmith had been ill for some time, but the composer had managed to keep the seriousness of his condition very secret. “For me, the reward that came at the end was getting to work with Jerry, and unfortunately this time it was much more poignant than exciting. It was pretty apparent that it was going to be the last time I was going to be able to work with him. It was obvious he wasn’t going to be doing this too much longer.” It was a final collaboration that almost didn’t happen.

Like *Small Soldiers*, the making of *Looney Tunes: Back in Action* was problematic. Among the many problems was the studio’s seeming unwillingness to hire Jerry Goldsmith - not for reasons of his failing health, but for marketability. “They wanted to use some contemporary rock music, like had been done on *Space Jam*,” Dante explained. “For a long time they stonewalled me on it - they didn’t want to call Jerry, they didn’t want to talk to Jerry. They tried to figure out reasons why he would turn it down. Ultimately, I wore them down. They liked something they saw in dailies one day - I can’t remember what it was - and I was a hero again for a day. So I got to use my leverage to get them to hire Jerry. I think if they had known how ill he was they probably would have had another reason not to hire him.”

The *Looney Tunes* assignment was not easy for Goldsmith. The difficulty wasn’t so much with finding the right tone or style - it had to do with the cuts. “It was another case of where the movie kept changing kept every five minutes,” Dante

acknowledged. "Scenes would be in, scenes would be out - animation would be in, animation would be out. New dialogue would also come in, so now the music was playing over lines that hadn't been there when Jerry recorded the music, which meant you either had to drop it in the mix or he'd have to re-orchestrate it. Movies have undergone more radical changes in the editing process in the past five to 10 years than they ever have previously. Now every picture is being changed after the preview, and that means the composer either has to re-write the music or re-edit it. Just before *Looney Tunes* Jerry had done *Timeline*. That score got thrown out because the picture had been re-cut so much that the music didn't fit any more, and he wasn't available to re-do it. Jerry had to roll with the punches." Always the professional, Goldsmith pushed on, but the extra work paired with his ailing health took its toll on the composer. "I think he enjoyed doing it, but I know it was difficult for him. He told me it was very hard to concentrate. Ultimately, Jerry couldn't finish the score. The last reel-and-a-half was done by John Debney."

Looney Tunes: Back in Action was indeed the last time Jerry Goldsmith's name appeared in a movie. After the debacle of *Timeline*, Goldsmith could no longer continue to work. He withdrew from project after project. Concerts were cancelled. In July 2004, Jerry Goldsmith lost his long battle with cancer. Everyone who loved his music mourned - not just his death, but more so the loss of his creativity, knowing there was more to come had he lived just a few more years. The world is left with Jerry Goldsmith's music, a body of work replete with the appreciation of those filmmakers who stood taller from the benefit of his contributions. "It is mind boggling to me that someone could write that much music in their lifetime, much less have it be different from itself," Dante stated. "Luckily, I never handed him a project that was problematic enough for him to say 'You know, I just can't do this.' But that's something that intrigues me about composers, and I asked Jerry once - what do you do when you go to the rough cut and it's really bad? Do you write bad music? What do you do? Jerry said that whenever he saw a picture in trouble he would work twice as hard to try and save it, to make it work. He really seemed to love that kind of challenge. The kind of movies that I made needed Jerry. I don't think I would have been as successful as I have been in the business if it weren't for the extra level of quality in my movies because of Jerry's music. I don't know if you can ask for more than that from a composer."



ABOUT THE TRANSFER

The 'Burbs is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with stereo 2.0 audio.

The 'Burbs was exclusively restored in 2K resolution by Arrow Films for this release. The original fine grain positive was scanned in 2K on a 4K ArriScan by NBCUniversal StudioPost. The film was graded to Director Joe Dante's specifications on the Baselight colour grading system at Prime Focus, London. The film was then restored at Deluxe Digital-EMEA, London, where thousands of instances of dirt, light scratches and debris were removed through a combination of software tools and techniques. Image stability and related picture issues were also improved. The soundtrack was mastered from the original audio elements by NBCUniversal StudioPost.

This restoration of *The 'Burbs* was overseen by James White on behalf of Arrow Films and has been approved by Joe Dante.

Restoration Supervisor: James White/Arrow Films

Film Scanning: NBCUniversal StudioPost

Colour Grading: Gerry Gedge/Prime Focus

Picture Restoration: Tom Barrett, Clayton Baker/Deluxe Digital-EMEA

Restoration and Colour Grading Management: Jo Griffin/Prime Focus, Mark Bonnici, Graham Jones/Deluxe Digital

Special Thanks: NBCUniversal StudioPost, Fabien Braule/Carlotta Films

A very special thanks to Joe Dante for his participation in this project.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and booklet produced by: Ewan Cant

Executive Producer: Francesco Simeoni

Production Assistant: Louise Buckler

QC and Proofing: Michael Brooke, Ewan Cant

Authoring: David Mackenzie

Subtitling: IBF Digital

Artist: Graham Humphreys

Design: Jack Pemberton

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Tim Curran, Joe Dante, Corey Feldman, Courtney Gains, Michael Heintzelman, Naomi Holwill, Lukas Kendall, David Mackenzie, Dana Olsen, Wendy Schaal, James H. Spencer, Robert M. Stevens, Calum Waddell



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